

Frequently Asked Questions For South Carolina Early Learning Standards

What are the Early Learning Standards? Early learning standards specify developmental expectations for preschool children. They are supported by practice and scientific research. They include performance-based standards and examples called “snapshots”. Snapshots were written to give teachers practical ways to see what is meant in the standard. (Children who meet the developmental expectations outlined in the Early Learning Standards should be prepared to master South Carolina’s Academic Standards).

Why are Early Learning Standards necessary? Early Learning Standards provide a shared framework for understanding and communicating expectations for young children’s development. They are a guide for parents, caregivers, teachers, directors, administrators and policy makers, all of whom share responsibility for the well being of young children. These standards are meant to weave together Head Start, Public Schools and private child care into a fabric that will reach every preschooler in South Carolina.

Why does South Carolina need its own Early Learning Standards? These standards reflect the shared values and commitments of the citizens of South Carolina to prepare young children for success in school. They reflect attention to all the domains of a child’s early learning and development and recognize that these domains are interrelated and interdependent.

How were the Early Learning Standards developed? In this initial development process, professionals from across the state contributed to content area discussions that resulted in these standards. The developmental domains, expectations, and standards reflect a survey of the scientific literature and practice-based evidence on child development. National and regional guidelines were also consulted, including those of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and Head Start Child Outcomes. Finally, a national review of 19 other states’ early learning standards informed

this work. Finally, a national review conducted by Catherine Scott Little, from SERVE.

Who wrote the Early Learning Standards and what resources were used? The development of the standards and snapshots within each domain were drafted by the Good Start Grow Smart Collaborative Partnership under the direction of Dr. Linda Mims, Director of the Office of Early Childhood Education at the SC Department of Education. The partnership includes:

- Representatives from the Department of Social Services
- Representatives from the Office of First Steps to School Readiness
- ABC Enhanced center teachers
- School district early childhood and special education resource teachers;
- Head Start program managers and directors;
- Representatives of the Elementary School Principals' Association;
- Educators from the University of South Carolina, Clemson, Furman and SC State University.
- Kindergarten teachers;
- Personnel from the SC Office of Early Childhood Education
- Catawba Indian Nation personnel
- SC Voices for Children
- Representatives for Private Child Care

The process used to develop the early learning standards reflected collaboration, shared values and the development of challenging and meaningful standards that reflect best practices and new knowledge gleaned from research and evidence. Next, focus groups of experts and teachers assisted in the refinement of the standards content and reviewed their conceptual alignment.

How would a school district or other early care and education program use the Early Learning Standards? These standards can be used as guides for developing and adopting curriculum content, including instructional methods and materials, assessment practices, and for planning professional development opportunities.

What are the expected outcomes of the Early Learning Standards? The Early Learning Standards are voluntary and applicable across all early learning environments, including Head Start, child care, tribal, faith based and public and private preschool programs.

Are school districts or other formal early learning environments, such as Title One 4 K classes, First Steps classes, and Head Start, required to adopt the Early Learning Standards? Yes. The Early Learning Standards have included the SC Academic 4 K and 5K standards, which are required for Title 1, First Steps and public school programs to adhere to.

Are child care programs and church preschool programs required to adopt the Early Learning Standards? No. The Early Learning Standards are voluntary for child care programs and church preschool programs. We hope all programs in South Carolina will choose to adopt and implement these standards.

How do the Early Learning Standards relate to the assessment of the development of young children? By setting appropriate expectations for young children in the five domains of early learning and development. The standards set the stage for appropriate curriculum development and assessment development. Appropriate assessment development takes into account the following:

- Young children learn in a variety of ways and develop at their own rate.
- Young children learn best through hands-on experiences as well as listening. They represent their knowledge by actions rather than by telling.
- Young children's learning is rapid and on going, point-in-time assessments do not give a complete picture of their learning.
- Young children's achievements are the result of a complex mix of their ability to learn and they're past learning opportunities.

The South Carolina Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education has adopted the South Carolina Readiness Assessment tool for 5K. The use of Work Sampling or Child Observation Record is recommended as an appropriate 4K assessment tool. For the children being served in Even Start program the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Inventory (PPVT) is also used. Head Start participates in the national reporting system along with nationally recognized assessment tools. The SC Education Department and The SC Department of Social Services have also adopted the ABC Enhanced standards and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale as appropriate tool to assess program quality.

What age group does the Early Learning Standards apply? The Early Learning Standards apply to all children that are three years of age through 5 years of age. This reflects the transition between preschool, Head Start, and the mandatory school enrollment at age six.

What is the relationship of Early Learning Standards and school readiness? The Early Learning Standards describe expected child development outcomes. They provide general content standards. When the Early Learning Standards are applied and expanded, in appropriate environments the children's developmental needs are met which ensures school readiness.